



The Foothills Parkway: Completing The “Missing Link”



Above: Construction of Bridge 2 in August 2012. (NPS photos)

Right: Bridge 2 as completed in December 2012. Completion of the “missing link” and the final paving project is possible by 2016 with appropriate funding and an aggressive schedule

Mega-Project* Profile: The Foothills Parkway

Estimated cost: \$29 million
(estimated)

Percentage of SER's FLTP Annual Allotment for
Category II: 580%

Percentage of NPS FLTP
Annual Allotment
For Category II: 580%

The Foothills Parkway. Congress authorized the Foothills Parkway as a scenic parkway on February 22, 1944. Of the seven Congressionally Mandated Parkways, the Foothills Parkway is the only remaining parkway yet to be completed. The entire 72-mile corridor is administered by Great Smoky Mountains National Park. However, only three segments totaling 22.5 miles are completed and open to the public.

Background. Between 1966 and 1970, a 6.4-mile section of road between U.S. Highway 321 in Walland and Carr Creek was constructed (Section 8F). In the 1980s, two contracts were awarded for construction of approximately 10 miles of road between Carr Creek and Wears Valley (Section 8E). Both projects experienced structural fill failures and erosion problems that caused the projects to be suspended in 1989, thus leaving a 1.65-mile segment uncompleted. The uncompleted section is referred to as the “missing link.”

In the 1990s, a new design was developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to complete the “missing link” using bridges, walls,

and fills to minimize surface disturbance and environmental impacts.

Current Status: Since early 2000, the National Park Service (NPS) and FHWA have worked together to develop a plan to complete the “missing link.” Four bridges and two road segments have been completed for \$46.2 million.

Less than one mile of the original 1.65 miles of the “missing link” remains unfinished. Projects are eligible for Title 23 funds from different programs such as the Federal Lands Transportation Program





Above: Construction of the Caylor Gap road segment, looking to the west. (NPS photo.)

(FLTP), Public Lands Highway Discretionary Program (PLHD), TEA-21 Section 1602, Project 352 and SAFETEA-LU High Priority Projects Codes 3093 and 4974.

Bridge 2 (FOOT 8E17) was completed in December 2012, at a cost of \$24.7 million, funded by Title 23, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The remaining sections of the “missing link” were combined under one contract in an attempt to complete construction by 2016. Funding for this project come from Title 23, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, FLTP, TEA-21 Earmarks and SAFETEA-LU earmarks. Total construction award to date is \$48,438,000.

Future Funding: The funding required for full completion of Sections 8E and 8F (including the “missing link”) is estimated at an additional \$29 million. This will complete the paving and miscellaneous work to open the entire 16 miles (Sections E and F) from Wears Valley to Walland, TN. Ideally funds for the 16-mile paving project need to be made available by the 4th quarter of FY2013 in order to complete the entire “missing link.”

* Mega Projects: The NPS transportation system is supported, in part, by funds from the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP). Currently, the NPS receives about \$250M/year from the FLTP. These funds are apportioned by formula among the seven NPS Regions. Most of these funds are used for “transportation asset management” – that is, to pay for the work required to keep existing assets in good condition. There are some projects, such as a major bridge repair or ship replacement, that require a much larger amount of funding than is available on an annual basis to the Region. These we call “Mega Projects.” The NPS is trying to come up with a way to fund them.

